



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

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Who is Responsible?

Dear Student, Parent or Guardian:

In 1957, concerned hunters asked the Montana Legislature to require that all youths 12 through 17 years of age be certified as having successfully completed a state Hunter Education Course to purchase any resident hunting license. In November of 2003, the Legislature passed a bill requiring any person who was born after January 1, 1985, to provide a certificate of completion from a hunter education course before purchasing a license. Even if the student does not plan to hunt, we strongly recommend that he or she complete the course to obtain the important information and skills related to the safe handling of firearms. Since 1987, all youths wanting to hunt during the bow and arrow season must successfully complete the state's Bowhunter Education Course, in addition to the hunter education course. Although the two courses are similar in appearance, their contents are distinctly different as the hunting tools they employ.

The Hunter Education Course includes basic information and skill related to the safe handling of firearms; as well as basic instruction in wildlife management, game identification, field care of game, landowner/hunter relations, and Montana's hunting laws and regulations. The course emphasizes safety, responsibility, respect, and ethical conduct when hunting and handling firearms. Where facilities are available, live-firing of BB guns, air rifles, or other firearms is sometimes included as part of the course. However, it is not offered in all instances. Even where live-firing is offered, it is not the purpose of this course to turn-out qualified marksmen. That is the responsibility of the student, parent(s) and local shooting clubs.

The Bowhunter Education Course includes basic information on archery equipment, the proper use of a bow and arrow, proper shot placement, hunter ethics and skills needed for blood trailing. Bowhunting marksmanship is not part of this course. It takes several months of intensive training and practice to learn how to properly tune and use bowhunting equipment, which is the hunter's responsibility. Safety, responsibility, respect, and ethical conduct are the primary topics in this course.

The Montana Hunter/Bowhunter Education courses are taught by volunteer instructors who give freely of their time and talents to promote safety and responsibility when using hunting equipment. They put many hours into these programs and receive no pay. Without these volunteers, Montana would not have such high quality hunter/bowhunter education programs to prepare our young hunters.

In order to pass these courses, the student is responsible for:

- 1) Attending **all** class sessions;
- 2) Passing the written examination with a satisfactory score;
- 3) Satisfy the instructor(s) as to the student's ability and attitude. **(With reference to attitude, even if the student attends every class and passes the examination, he or she will not be certified unless the instructor(s) is satisfied that the student will be a safe and responsible hunter.)**

Individuals 11 years of age or older can receive certification after the successful completion of the course. Any youth who is currently eleven but who will turn twelve by mid-January the following year will be eligible for fall hunting opportunities. **Please check the current year's regulations for the exact dates.**

A major part of this course is to instill personal responsibility in each participant. If any student needs special assistance; (i.e.) attention to a physical impairment such as hearing, vision, or reading comprehension, please contact the instructor. Every effort will be made to accommodate the special need.

All adults and parents are welcome and encouraged to participate in any or all of the classes. Thank you for your understanding and support of your local volunteer instructors, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and these worthwhile programs

Sincerely,

Wayde Cooperider

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Hunter / Bowhunter Education Programs
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ADDENDA

Section 45-8-344, MCA, use **of firearms by children under fourteen prohibited** – exceptions. It is unlawful for a parent, guardian, or other person having charge or custody of a minor child under the age of 14 years to permit the minor child to carry or use in public any firearms – except when the child is accompanied by a person having charge or custody of the child or under the supervision of a qualified firearms safety instructor or an adult who has been authorized by the parent or guardian.

NOTE: The Department recommends those adults who are authorized by the parent or guardian to take a youth between 12 and 14 years of age hunting or shooting to have in their possession a written authorization stating such.